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*THE EARLY LIFE OF ROBERT SOUTHEY, 1774-1803.* By William Haller, Ph.D., Instructor in English in Columbia University, New York, Columbia University Press, 1917.

It is not necessary to justify a study of the life of Southey. The curious thing is that no adequate attempt at a systematic analysis of his mind and his work has been made hitherto. There have been only the undigested masses of correspondence published by members of his family and the appreciative but sketchy account by Edward Dowden in the English Men of Letters Series. Interest in Southey in the past two generations has been flickering, with only here and there a devoted admirer to keep the flame alive or a dispassionate student to vindicate for a zealous man of letters the rank which in his own day he enjoyed among the greatest of his craft. It is in the spirit of one of the latter group that Dr. Haller approaches his subject. By a careful examination of Southey's early poetry in relation to the prevailing tendencies in politics and philosophy, and more particularly by emphasizing Southey's priority in bringing before readers of literature the peculiar ideas and style of the new school of poetry, he succeeds in explaining how and with what justice Southey came to be looked upon as the leading spirit of the new school and brings the historical importance of Southey into very striking relief.

In the preface Dr. Haller makes a modest statement of the scope of his undertaking. "My purpose," he says, "is merely to supply students with a faithful account of the most interesting and least known period in the life and work of an important English writer of a momentous time in history. This book covers, therefore, only the first twenty-nine years of Southey's career—his boyhood at school and university; his reactions to literary and political movements in his youth; his early associations with Coleridge, Lamb, Wordsworth, Humphry Davy, John Rickman, William Taylor of Norwich, and others; his share in a scheme for emigration to America for the purpose of establishing there a communistic society or 'pantisocracy'; his characteristics as a young man, poet, and man of letters, together with the rise of his peculiar literary and personal reputation in association with the group of men who came to be known as the 'lake school'; and in conclusion his settling down in what was to be his final home at Keswick." The new material for the purely biographic aspect of the study is evidently neither extensive nor important. But a painstaking correlation of all the available facts results in clarifying some of the interesting incidents in Southey's life. We obtain for the first time a complete and coherent narrative of the Pantisocratic scheme. We learn how the idea originated with Southey and caught fire in the mind of Coleridge, how it was fed by plausible land speculators from the new world, how it struggled valiantly to find a definite habitat first on the banks of the Susquehanna and then in the less remote but perhaps equally romantic regions of Wales, and how it finally

evaporated on contact with some cold realities. It was the calculating spirit of Southey that stripped the dream of one illusory feature after another. His sober and admirable thoughtfulness for his mother and for the wife he was about to take, as well as for other persons whose welfare was closely bound up with his own, had already extinguished his own impractical dreams. The recovery from Pantisocracy was the beginning of a general reaction, stimulated, as Dr. Haller suggests, in part by antagonism to Coleridge's philosophic madness. His desire for change in political institutions was considerably allayed by his first visit to Portugal, in 1796, though it is hard to understand why the discovery of a more wretched state of affairs in Portugal should reconcile one to evils deeply felt in England. It seems to show how little Southey's principles were the outcome of reasoning, how much the result of his fundamentally timid temperament. After losing his exalted hopes for mankind, Southey, like Wordsworth, turned to mystic adoration of inanimate nature.

To bring into relief the prominence of Southey's poetry, Dr. Haller points out that his contemporaries became aware of the emergence of a new school of poetry in the persons of a group of young men—Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Charles Lloyd, Robert Lovel—who were associated by intimate personal ties, who frequently indulged in joint publication, and whose poetry was characterized by certain striking departures from the conventional. They were recognized by their enthusiasm for some of the new ideas that were disturbing Europe, by "the free and daring use of new forms, together with the turning to nature, to country scenes and country people, and the use of a greater range as well as greater simplicity of language." Southey had published more frequently and on a more ambitious scale than any of the other poets in this group. Before the date of *Lyrical Ballads* he was known as the author of a pretentious epic, "Joan of Arc," and his shorter poems had appeared in several other volumes. He had besides written a book of his travels in Portugal and was contributing to the *Morning Post* and the *Critical Review*. It was therefore natural that he should have been singled out as the representative of the New School when Canning needed a scapegoat for the *Anti-Jacobin*. On this eminence he was finally established by "Thalaba" and Jeffrey's memorable article on it in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review* associating Southey's poetical principles with those of Wordsworth. Dr. Haller's analysis of the elements which at this period were common to the poetry of Southey and Wordsworth justifies the attitude of contemporary critics in attaching to them a common denomination. Subsequently their paths diverged and they sought to disclaim any affinity, imputing the epithet of "lakers" to the accident of geographical neighborhood.

Dr. Haller enters into a very careful examination of all of Southey's poetry up to the publication of "Thalaba." He studies

the genesis of the ideas and the literary influences which determined the form of each composition, and the result is always illuminating. His judgments are mature and well-balanced, showing no disposition to exaggerate the intrinsic value of Southey's work. There are pages of admirable psychological analysis, though perhaps in discussing Southey's character the writer is inclined to show too great a deference to Southey's weaknesses. It seems as if it were laboring a point too strenuously to explain a certain blindness of Southey's to the rational and his terrified reactions to the vital and progressive forces of his time by reference to his sufferings from the visitations of death among those he loved. His experiences in this were not so unusual as to constitute a special plea.

Dr. Haller writes excellently and altogether he has produced a book which satisfies every reasonable demand that the student of literature can make upon it. We wish him success in his design to continue the study here begun and we shall look forward with interest to the appearance of the next portion of his work.

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*ILLUSTRATIONS OF CHAUCER'S ENGLAND*, edited by Dorothy Hughes, M.A., with a Preface by A. F. Pollard, M.A., Litt.D. [University of London Intermediate Source-books of History, No. I.] Longmans, Green and Co., London, New York, Bombay, etc. 1918. Pp. xiv+302. \$2.50 net.

Since 1857, when the English government adopted a plan proposed by the Master of the Rolls for the publication of original materials for English history, and since the founding of the Early English Text Society (1863), and the Chaucer Society (1868), English students of history and literature have more and more become accustomed to go to the sources for their facts. And the volume before us is a source-book.

In the words of Mr. Pollard's Preface: "The immediate object of this volume, and of the series which it inaugurates, is of a practical character. It is to remove some of the difficulties which beset students, teachers, and examiners in connection with the original texts prescribed as part of the Intermediate course and examination in history in the University of London." The editor is no novice in dealing with sources, as her "Early Years of Edward III," published in 1915, well shows.

Obviously, a book made up to suit the needs of a specific course in one institution is compelled to move within somewhat narrow lines and cannot be regarded as representing the wholly untrammelled choice of the editor. But owing to the fact that Mr. Pollard writes the preface, the editor herself nowhere tells us precisely what she is aiming to do. The title suggests to the